DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 463 491 CG 031 657

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TITLE Young Adults from Single versus Two-Parent Households: Attitudes toward Maternal Employment and Quality of Current Relationships with Parents.

PUB DATE 2002-00-00
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Employed Parents; Employed Women; Higher Education; *Mothers; *One Parent Family; Parent Child Relationship; *Student Attitudes; Undergraduate Students; *Young Adults

ABSTRACT

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Young Adults from Single versus Two-Parent Households: Attitudes toward maternal employment and quality of current relationships with parents

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2002

Abstract

To identify the attitudes towards maternal employment of undergraduates reared in single-parent families compared to those in dual-parent households, 717 undergraduates were surveyed. Subjects were divided into two groups based on number of household parents. Between groups t-tests revealed a significant effect on the BACMEC benefits subscale; students reared by single parents perceived greater benefits of maternal employment than those raised in two-parent households. Subjects from single parent backgrounds were more likely than those with two parents to blame problems with their quality of life on their mother's work status. T-tests revealed that students raised in integral families were more approving of their fathers than students reared in single-parent households.

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Introduction

Before 1969, controversy about the effects of divorce and maternal employment on children was not frequently discussed because divorce was not as common and not as many women worked outside the home as in more recent decades. In 1969, Ronald Reagan, who was then governor, signed into law statutory provisions for no-fault divorce. Since that time divorce rates have increased dramatically and with it there has been increased concern about the welfare of children from divorced families. Does divorce and maternal employment negatively affect children, and if so how? More importantly, how can we learn from the experiences of divorced families to ensure the best scenario and environment for children of divorce?

In a book, (The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce), describing their 25 year longitudinal study comparing divorced and integral families, Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee (2000), examined the various effects of divorce on children and their families. Wallerstein et al. revealed in their study that children of divorced families had, on average, more psychological problems, started sexual activity at a younger age, and showed increased aggression when compared with children from integral families of similar socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural environments. One reason hypothesized by Wallerstein and her colleagues was that once separated, parents who have suffered much turmoil themselves turned their attention to their own needs and healing and, inadvertently, their children's needs are often overlooked. Frequently, even mothers who did not work outside the home before divorcing now faced the pressing obligation to earn a living. In addition to the ramifications of adjusting to life as a single parent and the increased financial burden, many of these mothers had the increased responsibility of tending to the heightened emotional, physical, and mental needs of their children. These children attempted to cope with the new familial situation and their feelings of uncertainty about their future. Wallerstein further argues that the two-year period following the separation, labeled the "critical period", is often not the time for concern. According to their study, children are often adversely affected by their parent's divorce long into their adulthood, and to varying degrees, sometimes for their entire lives. Many of these children's difficulties do not surface as involvement in crime, drugs, or promiscuity, but rather are reflected more in subtle psychological differences. Several residual characteristics manifest as low self-esteem, mistrust, and a lack of understanding of how successful marriages are built, developed, and maintained.

In a review of The Virginia Longitudinal Study (VLS), The Hetherington and Clingempeel Study of Divorce and Remarriage (D&R), and The National Study of Nonshared Environment (NSES), Hetherington and Kelly (2002) acknowledged in their book, For Better or For Worse, that divorce can have negative consequences; however, they also discerned considerable and often unreported beneficial consequences for some of these children. The data yielded by these studies revealed that 80% of these children of divorce became accustomed to their new familial situation and developed into appropriately well-adjusted children and adults. Although evidence was found that indicated various detrimental effects of divorce, Hetherington and Kelly (2002)

emphasize the finding that the lessons in life and coping skills these children of divorce develop as a result of the divorce may help them be more resilient in stressful life situations in the future.

These three studies, including both divorced and integral families, had a collective sample size of 1066 families, and individual sample sizes of 144 (LVS), 202 (D&R) and 720 (NSES) with the VLS beginning in 1971. All three groups included evaluation of both divorced and integral families. Hetherington assessed these families with a variety of evaluation methods, providing a very comprehensive study of the effects of divorce on children. One interesting conclusion that both Wallerstein and Hetherington deduce, although they characterize the eventual outcome of divorce somewhat differently, is summarized in Hetherington and Kelly's book, For Better or For Worse (2002); "The end of marriage is usually brutally painful."

Children are affected differently than their parents by stressful events that follow divorce. Sandler, Tein, Mehta, Wolchick, and Ayers (2000) studied three separate models pertaining to coping efficacy and children's perception of events. They questioned how these events might shape children's internalization of the situations and affect the possible development of psychological troubles in children. Sandler et al. defines coping efficacy as "a global belief that one can deal with both demands and the emotions aroused by a situation" (2000). It is important to distinguish coping efficacy from optimism. Coping efficacy involves the confidence certain people have that they will be able to handle negative circumstances effectively as opposed to a conviction that positive outcomes are more probable (Scheier & Carver, 1987). It is this belief in people's ability to manage situations that distinguish coping efficacy from fundamental attributions of negative events (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1992).

The Sandler et al. study (2000) looked at 356 children whose parents had divorced within two years of the study. These children, between nine and twelve years old, lived with their mothers fifty percent or more of the time. All of these children and their parents were interviewed, but only 240 were participants in the intercession study. These participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups; one included parents and children, one had just parents, and the other was a self-study reading program.
The current study tested three models. Model one looked at how the attempts toward coping affects children of divorce, model two analyzed how coping efficacy affects children's handling of their parents' divorce and other stressful events, and model three evaluates the correlation between children of divorced parents and psychological problems. Longitudinal and cross-sectional analyses were used to analyze the effect coping efficacy may have on circumvention coping, effective coping, and psychological troubles. Individual growth curves were used to measure similar hypotheses. Anxiety producing circumstances frequently encountered by families of divorce were chosen to shape the concepts used. These concepts were financial troubles, psychological undermining of the mothers, bad circumstances associated with divorce, and parental arguments.

Sandler et al. (2000) found that coping efficacy significantly intercedes the interactions between effective coping attempts and psychological troubles of children with divorced parents. The longitudinal, cross-sectional, and individual growth curve models all confirmed the impact that coping efficacy has on coping with and handling of stressful circumstances. The children who used constructive coping skills more

frequently experienced affirmative results and had more confidence in their ability to handle challenging situations in the future. These children proved less likely to develop psychological troubles. The children who employed circumvention coping to handle circumstances of stress and tension were found to have a higher incidence of psychological troubles and lower perception of their coping efficacy. The results of Sandler et al. (2002) highlight the potential importance of fostering children's self efficacy following divorce.

Dunlop and Burns (2001) examined the family structures of both divorced and integral families to reveal the connection between self-image and parent-child relations. Their study also explored potential gender differences. The study consisted of three intervals lasting a total of 10 years beginning in adolescence, and extending into early adulthood. A previous study performed by Dunlop and Burns (1988) found that variation in self-image between divorced and integral families was not found to be significant. Self-image scores became higher as the age of participants increased. The relationship between parent and child showed that children who rated the quality of parenting styles as higher showed better self-image. The children's perception of their mothers' parenting skills remained very similar whether the parents were divorced or together. The fathers who were divorced were perceived as significantly less caring when compared with fathers of integral families. The female subjects from both groups showed lower self-image scores than the males.

Dunlop and Burns (2001) reference Eric Erikson's work on identity formation and its importance to proper development in adolescence (Erikson, 1950). Individuation in adolescents is seen as a pivotal element in achievement of autonomy in psychoanalytic theory (Blos, 1979). Divorce may alter the parent-child relationships during this transitional period, thus affecting the adolescent's self-identity (Kalter, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

In contrast, Cooper et al. (1983) reviewed empirical findings and theorized that a "relational" approach may be more relevant than the "crisis" type viewpoint explained above. This relational theory is a social-cognitive approach that looks more closely at the relations between families and their systems of interrelating. According to Longfellow (1979) interpersonal reasoning protects adolescents from the divorce by allowing them to identify with the situation of each parent and view themselves as outside their parent's discord. By taking on more responsibility following the divorce, Weiss (1979) suggests that adolescents' individuation process may be quickened. The adolescents share more accountability and demonstrate a more cooperative relationship with their parents. Although there are differences between these theories, the importance of interactions between parents and children is present throughout.

Researchers have studied the different relationships between adolescents and their mothers and fathers in intact and divorced families. Zill et al.1993; Amato and Keith 1991; & Buchanan et al.1991 found their results were similar to Dunlop and Burns in the correlation of the non-optimal relationships between adolescents and their divorced fathers. Rutter (1980) noted males may be more vulnerable in childhood and females may develop higher disorder rates in adulthood, but the connection to divorce has not been established. Zill et al. (1993) noted that the quality of relations between 12-16 year olds and divorced fathers was lower when compared with integral families. As the

adolescents aged however, (18-22 years old) the quality of interaction with both divorced parents was reported as lower.

Buchanan et al. (1991) noted that children had higher anxiety and depression rates that continued through adolescence, feeling stuck between disputing parents. Close relations with mothers correlated with significantly less anxiety and lack of control feelings in adolescence. Gender difference studies in the past have suggested that boys display more harmful reactions to parental divorce.

Various measures of self-concept have been used to measure the impact of divorce. Baumrind's study (1991) noted that divorced parents classified as authoritative and democratic were associated with better modification in their children and adolescents than authoritarian or permissive parents (Anderson et al., 1992; Baumrind, 1991; Guidubaldi et al., 1986; Santrock & Warshak, 1979). Pasley and Healow (1988) noted that family functioning and gender were important aspects in addition to family structure. Amato (1987) theorized that family methods were more relevant than family structure. Funder (1996) saw significant relations between self-image and "measure of family ambiance". Rodgers (1996) using the Parent Bonding Inventory (PBI) (Parker, 1979, 1990) studied the connection between parent- child relations and adult affective symptoms. This extensive British study noted that children of divorced families rated both parents as less caring when compared with children of non-divorced parents.

This study performed by Dunlop and Burns (2000) was based on children between the ages of 13 and 16 at the time of their parents' divorce with a mean age of 14.7 years. The divorce group totaled 39 (20 boys and 19 girls) and the control group of integral families totaled 41 (22 boys and 19 girls). The third time period shows a mean age of 24.9 years. The divorced group must have been separated less than two years. Measures were taken of the control subjects to ensure fair representation of different socioeconomic groups to make equlivant to the divorce subjects. The tests used were the Offer Self-Image Questionnaire (OSIQ) (Offer, 1977) and the Parent Bonding Inventory (PBI) (Parker et al., 1979; Parker, 1990). Four questions relating to the hypothesis were examined at each time period relating to gender differences, association between PBI scale ratings and OSIQ scores, association between OSIQ scores and presence of optimal parents, and whether the testing scores reveal anything in connection with gender or custody of adolescents at the time of the divorce. The study explored how the "quality of relationships between parents and adolescents moderat[ing] self image" (Dunlop & Burns, 2000).

In all of the time periods, Dunlop and Burns found that the participants reported divorced fathers as less caring than integral fathers. There was no significant gender difference in adolescents' responses or in the mothers' ratings in either group. Adolescents' evaluation of their custodial parents' parenting style was positively correlated with adolescents' self-image. Similar results were found when these groups were measured disjointedly. Differences within each family following divorce may have influence on parent and child self-image. Subjects measured at the oldest age showed a significant divergence in the rating of family structure. Two thirds of the integral group rated both parents as optimal. In the divorce group, adults were rated as being more equal in all ratings (i.e, both bad, both good, or one bad one good. The only gender difference involved lower self-image among the women.

The findings indicated that parents high in care and low in dominating behavior tended to have adolescents with better self-image. Results were more striking in integral families but were significant in both groups. Additionally, divorced fathers' relationships with adolescents were rated poorly compared to integral families. The quality of relationship was a better forecaster of self-image scores than either the parent or the child's gender. These findings are more consistent with the family "relational model" than the "crisis model" (which pertains to family structure). Adults of divorced parents seemed to marry earlier and start families sooner than adults from integral families.

A meta-analysis was conducted by Amato and Keith (1991) to identify and attempt to generalize the findings of numerous studies on the detrimental effects of divorce among children. They combined measures of scholastic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, social competence, and relationships with parents to determine the level of well-being for included children. Research on these variables has yielded many contradictory findings and some researchers have begun to concede that though many children display negative results of divorce, the prevalence of seriously problematic children is not very high (Emery, 1988). Demo and Acock (1988) argue that significant methodological limitations preclude our drawing strong conclusions from extant literature.

Amato and Keith (1991) conducted a study to determine the differences between children in intact and divorced families, and considered three possible explanations for these differences: parental absence, economic disadvantage, and family conflict. Parental absence is largely attributable to be the consequence of decreased contact with the noncustodial parent (Amato, 1987; Furstenberg, & Nord, 1985; White, Brinkerhoff, & Booth, 1985). Brandwein, Brown, and Fox (1974) also suggest that the need for a custodial parent to enter the work force may decrease time and energy spent with the children. This decrease in parental attention has been linked to increases in child misbehavior, low self-esteem, academic failure, and other problems (Rollins & Thomas, 1979). This explanation leads to a hypothesis that children who have lost a parent through death will have behavioral problems similar to those seen in children whose parents divorce.

Single-parent families are also thought to differ from other family types in that they endure economic disadvantages due to the absence of income earned by the noncustodial parent (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Weitzman, 1985). This suggests that when income is controlled, adolescents from divorced and intact families should not differ. Some hypothesize that the single-parent families in which the children reside with the father will not experience as much difficulty as mother-headed households due to men's normally having higher incomes than women.

The family conflict perspective is based on the idea that there is hostility between parents prior to and following separation that causes unhappiness, stress, and insecurity in children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parents also experience a great deal of psychological stress during the period in which they are divorcing and may as a result become less effective in relationships with their children (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). It has also been shown that this interparental conflict can at times involve the children and have a negative effect on the child-parent relationship (Amato, 1986; Johnston, Kline, & Tschann, 1989). This perspective

suggests that children found within divorced families may experience the same or even fewer negative consequences than children in high conflict intact families.

Amato & Keith (1991) evaluated 284 effect sizes and found that they tended to be negative, showing that over two thirds of the studies used for the analysis found children of single-parents to have lower levels of well-being than children found in intact family settings. However, these calculations were also found to be fairly weak. The mean effect size for studies without controls was found to be -.19, while the mean for those studies with controls was -.13, showing that the effects sizes of studies using controls were slightly less negative. Twenty-three percent of the studies were found to be negative and significant, while only two percent were shown to be positive and significant. Only a quarter of the effect sizes were significant; the remaining studies did not find significant group differences in well-being.

The combined results of the meta-analysis were found to support the idea that children of divorced families actually do experience a lower level of well-being, and to refute the suggestion that they adapt quickly without long-lasting effects. However, the effect sizes were quite small and failed to support beliefs that the negative consequences of divorce are substantial (Sorosky, 1977). A between-studies comparison was also conducted using Hedges and Olkin's (1985) measure of homogeneity. All of these measures were found to be significant for each of the study characteristics used, suggesting that some study types are responsible for the observed variations in effect size. Mother-child relations were found to be positive in studies using control variables, suggesting that mother-child relations in divorced families are better when studies control for social class.

The academic achievement and conduct effect sizes for sex were found to be weaker for mixed samples than for samples limited to only one sex, and all-female samples were found to have a larger effect size. The popular belief that males are more negatively affected by divorce was not supported by these results with the exception that they did show more difficulty on measures of social adjustment. The reasons for this difference in social adjustment is difficult to explain given that no significant differences were found on measures of conduct or self-esteem. Several researchers have found that sex does not have a significant effect on children's adjustment to divorce (Amato, 1987; Amato & Ochiltree, 1987; Brady, Bray, & Zeeb, 1986). Consistent with this earlier work, Amato and Keith's (1991) findings support the notion that sex does not have a significant effect on a child's adjustment following divorce. In contrast, age was shown to have a significant relationship to psychological adjustment, social adjustment, father-child relations, and mother-child relations. Effect sizes were found to be largest when the subjects were from the middle age groups including primary and high school children. The effect sizes for college age participants were not found to be significant except on measures of father-child relations. The extent of conduct problems were found to decrease as the amount of time since the divorce increased.

The economic disadvantage perspective suggests that no differences of family type should be observed if families are matched for income level. Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, & McLoughlin (1983) found that matching for income levels greatly reduces the number of significant findings. However, Guidubaldi et al. found that children of divorced families continued to score lower on several variables of child well being than those in intact families despite being matched for family income. This

indicates that economic disadvantage may account for some of the differences seen between single and stepparent families, but cannot account for their entirety. This perspective also suggests that children's well-being should increase when the child's mother remarries, because of the resultant increase in economic resources. However, this prediction has not been empirically supported. The economic disadvantage perspective, which suggests that those single-parent children residing with their fathers have a higher degree of well-being due to males' normally earning higher wages, was supported by the Amato & Keith meta-analysis. However, this finding may be an artifact of confounding between the parent and child's sexes in many studies (Camara, & Resnick, 1988; Santrock, & Warshak, 1979).

The family conflict model was assessed through eight studies that provided measurement for both high and low conflict two-parent families and divorced families. These studies showed children from high-conflict, intact families scored lower than children in low-conflict, intact families on measurements of conduct quality, psychological adjustment, and self-concept. These same children also scored lower on measures of self-esteem and psychological adjustment when compared to children in divorced families. Such findings strongly indicate the importance of family conflict in shaping children's outcomes. Conflict was found to be significantly related to academic achievement, social competence, and behavior by Long, Forehand, Fauber, and Brody (1987), and boys in divorced families were found to exhibit more behavioral problems than those in high-conflict families prior to separation (Block, Block, & Gjerde, 1986). All of these findings support the hypothesis that children from high-conflict families show similar problems to those displayed by children from divorced families.

Ten out of the eleven relevant studies reviewed by Amato & Keith (1991) provided evidence that decreased parental conflict following divorce resulted in better adjustment among children. Family conflict seems to explain many of the negative consequences seen in divorced families. Many researchers have theorized that adjustment difficulties following divorce thend to improve with the passage of time. Longitudinal studies by Kurdek, Blisk, and Siesky (1981), Parish and Wigle (1985), and Rickel and Langner (1985) tend to support this notion.

These findings suggest that the detrimental effects of divorce or separation on children most likely involve the interplay of many factors. Adult children of divorced families have been shown to receive less education (McLanahan, 1985), to depend more on welfare (McLanahan, 1988), earn less (Hill, Augustyniak, & Ponza, 1987), and are more likely to have children while single (McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988) or to be divorced (Glenn & Kramer, 1987). These findings suggest that divorce may in fact exert a long-lasting effect on the children who are exposed to it.

Dunn, Davies, O'Connor, and Sturgess (2001) focused their study on the lives and friendships of children in step-parent and single-parent families. They put special emphasis on determining the children's views of family experiences and the development of outside peer relationships. Hartup (1999), Kramer and Gottman (1992), and Ladd and Kochenderfer (1996) developed studies showing evidence that close relationships provide children in stressful situations with notable support. These relationships offer opportunities to communicate that are especially important, given the evidence that the lack of communication between children and parents is often an important source of

stressful experience (Gorell Barnes, Thompson, & Burchardt, 1998; Walczack & Burns, 1984).

Another important factor that is considered is the extent that the child is immersed in ongoing family conflict. High participatory family conflict has been related to greater adjustment problems (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Davis, Hops, Alpert, & Sheeber, 1998). Dunn et al. (2001) considered the additional effects of other changes that accompany divorce and remarriage, such as dual household living and changes in friendship maintenance. Some suggest that children experiencing family conflict are more likely to have conflicted peer relationships with those who have not experienced similar family difficulties. The subjects of the Dunn et al. study in 2001 were contracted through the Avon Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood (ALSPC). After contacting potential candidates, 192 families from the ALSPC agreed to participate in the study; including 50 non-step families, 49 step-parent families, 45 complex step-families, and 48 single-parent families. All children in these families were between 7 to 17 years of age. Only those children who consistently moved between households were asked questions concerning dual household living and those younger children who did not complete all the questions were not included in composite measurements.

It was found that those who were able to give an account of their communication experiences were significantly older than those unable to do so. A child's intimate confidants following separation were found to most likely be grandparents or friends; older children were more likely to confide in other siblings. Current family experiences and family setting were found to be related to the child's age. Older children were less likely to confide in parents, had less positive parental relationships, were more involved in parental conflict, and took part less often in family activities. After controlling for age differences it was found that children were much more likely to confide in the parent with biological relatedness than in stepparents. Therefore, children were closer in mother-child relations if residing with the biological mother and closer in father-child relations if residing with the biological father.

The hypothesis that children experienced a low amount of communication about parental separation initially and confided to those outside the family was supported. Children in stepfamilies were found to have less positive relationships and confide less in steprelatives than with their biological mothers and fathers. No relationship was found between amount of child involvement in parental conflict and different family types.

A study conducted by Rigby (1993) focused on how peer interactions affect children's behaviors and influence their perceptions of the quality of family life. The 1,012 (460 boys and 552 girls) subjects used in the Rigby study were of Australian descent and of school age, ranging from 11-16 years of age. In this study, Rigby assessed the connection between peer-group behavior and family background. Previous research on this topic has concluded that children who are shown warmth and attention by their families as they grow are often characterized as having positive self-esteem and emotional well-being. Alternatively, children who are rejected by their families tend to be more aggressive, angry and anti-social.

Rigby's study (1993) measured both family and parental relationships and children's relationships with their peers, as well as family intactness, whether the child lived with their mothers only, fathers only, or with both parents. A regression analysis

showed that non-intact families, (those missing a parent) tended to be characterized by poorer family functioning.

Children who acted more prosocially with peers were found to report more positive relationships with and attitudes toward each parent (Rigby, 1993). Among children living with their mothers alone, boys were more likely to be victimized by peers and have negative relations with the absent father, to have the tendency to bully, and have more negative attitudes toward the mothers.

In 1994, White examined whether family solidarity was lower for people raised in divorced single-parent families than for people in intact families, and whether parental remarriage was associated with higher or lower solidarity than remaining in the single-parent family. Previous research has shown that there are disadvantages for children associated with parental divorce, such as maladjustment during adolescence, problems in school, and behavioral problems (Dornbusch, Carlismith, Bushwall, Ritter, Leiderman, Hastorf, & Goss 1985). These children are also more likely to marry and have children earlier, and have a greater risk of divorce and nonmarital childbearing than children from intact families (Lindner, Hagan, & Brown 1992).

White (1994) surveyed 3,625 people from the National Survey of Families and Households, and asked them about their family structure (intact, single parent, or remarried). This study controlled for family income, the number of siblings, the respondent's age and sex, and the parents' ages and health.

MANOVA indicated a negative effect of divorce among single-parent families on parent-child solidarity in adulthood. Children from single-parent families reported lower quality relationships with both parents than children in intact families; these children also reported having received less help and support from their parents than children from intact families. Also, this research showed that the child's relationship with the non-custodial parent suffered considerably as a result of divorce. Results from this experiment also confirmed previous findings by Hogan et al. (1993) that when children grow up and get married, they have stronger relationships with their parents. Overall, this study showed that divorce and living in a single-parent family can have negative consequences for children, but that the alternative, parental remarriage, may require an even more difficult adjustment for the child.

The present study was performed in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between family background, maternal employment, and college students' beliefs about the consequences of maternal employment. The impact of family background on the quality of current relationships with mothers and fathers was also explored.

Method

The subjects used in this study were 717 college students. The sample consisted of 279 men and 438 women who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course at Ursinus College in Pennsylvania. The subjects ranged in age from 17 to 27 years old. Among the participants, 78 reported having been reared in single parent households, while 639 were reared in households with both parents. Within the single parent household group, 27.3% reported that a parent's death was responsible for their living with only the one remaining parent, while for 63.6% divorce was responsible. The

majority of the participants reared in single parent households (95.5 %) had primarily resided with their mothers.

Procedure:

The packet used in this study was handed out to subjects in the introductory psychology class in which they were enrolled. Subjects were asked to fill out the packet in its entirety. Ample time was given to the students to complete the questionnaire packet. The packet used in this study consisted of four different parts.

In part one, subjects were asked to provide demographic information and to answer questions concerning their career and family expectations. These questions required subjects to disclose information concerning their expectations about family plans, job type, job characteristics, and work preference based on the age of their youngest child. Subjects were also asked 10 questions concerning their attitudes toward their mother and father. These questions required subjects to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a 4 point Likert scale.

Part two of the packet was made up of the BACMEC questionnaire (Greenberger et al. 1988). The BACMEC is a 24-item scale developed to measure Beliefs About the Consequences of Maternal Employment for Children. The BACMEC included beliefs about both benefits (13 items) and costs (11 items). Studies of five samples (n=375) have demonstrated that the total BACMEC scale and its subscales are highly reliable and have good convergent, divergent, and concurrent validity (Greenberger et al. 1988).

In part three of the packet, subjects were asked to disclose information about their mother's work status at each stage of development. The stages of development were infancy (birth to 1 1/2 years old), preschool (2 to 5 years old), childhood (6 to 12 years old), and adolescence (13 to 18 years old). The subjects were asked to report whether their mothers were employed parttime, fulltime, or not employed outside the home during each stage of development. Subjects also disclosed information about their mother's job, indicating whether it was professional, white collar, or blue collar work. Subjects were also asked to indicate whether or not they had been raised in a single parent household.

Part four of the packet consisted of the CAS, the Childhood Appraisal Scale (Chambliss, Owens, & Carr 1991). The CAS is an 18-item questionnaire designed to measure the subject's perception of the consequences of their mother's work status. The subjects were asked to rate each item on a scale from 1 to 4 depending on how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The statements permitted subjects to indicate if they felt their lives would have been different if their mother's work status had been different when they were growing up. This allowed an assessment of the perceived impact of fulltime and part-time maternal employment, as well as unemployment.

Results

Subjects were divided into two groups based on whether or not they had been reared in a single parent household. Chi-square analyses revealed significant differences in maternal employment history between students from single parent households and those from two-parent households. During the infancy, preschool, and elementary school

developmental periods, students reared in single parent homes were more likely to have an employed mother than their counterparts from two-parent homes.

Table 1 Maternal Employment During Participant's Infancy

	Single Parent Home	Two-Parent Home
Maternal Employment		
Parttime or Fulltime Employed	55%	28%
Nonemployed	45%	72%

Chi-square=23.95, df=2, p<.001

Table 2 Maternal Employment During Participant's Preschool Years

	Single Parent Home	Two-Parent Home
Maternal Employment		
Parttime or Fulltime Employed	78%	48%
Nonemployed	22%	52%

Chi-square=32.06, df=2, p<.001

Table 3 Maternal Employment During Participant's Elementary School Years

	Single Parent Home	Two-Parent Home
Maternal Employment		
Parttime or Fulltime Employed	89%	67%
Nonemployed	11%	34%

Chi-square=34.90, df=2, p<.001

Table 4 Maternal Employment During Participant's Adolescence

	Single Parent Home	Two-Parent Home

Maternal Employment		
Parttime or Fulltime Employed	84%	86%
Nonemployed	16%	14%

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Scores on the two BACMEC subscales ("benefits" and "costs" of maternal employment) were calculated for each subject by adding the directionally adjusted item values. Between groups t-tests revealed a significant type of household effect on the benefits subscale ($t=2.14$, $df=703$, $p<.05$) but no significant difference on the costs subscale; students reared in single parent households perceived significantly greater benefits of maternal employment than students raised in two-parent households (single parent $x=52.24$, $s.d.=8.91$, $n=75$ versus two-parent $x=49.39$, $s.d.=11.11$, $n=630$).

Scores on the CAS were calculated for each subject by adding the directionally adjusted item values. Between groups t-tests revealed a significant type of household effect on the CAS ($t=3.62$, $df=695$, $p<.05$); students reared in single parent households attributed more negative outcomes to their mother's work status than students raised in two-parent households (single parent $x=31.95$, $s.d.=9.517$, $n=73$ versus two-parent $x=27.88$, $s.d.=9.03$, $n=624$).

Directionally adjusted items assessing the quality of current relationships with mothers and fathers were totaled to create two summary scales. Although between-group t-tests revealed no significant differences on the Maternal Relationship scale, t-tests revealed a significant type of household effect on the Paternal Relationship Scale ($t=12.34$, $df=686$, $p<.05$); the students raised in integral families provided a more approving evaluation of their fathers (two-parent $x=9.94$, $s.d.=2.998$, $n=614$) than students raised in single parent households ($x=5.12$, $s.d.=4.37$, $n=74$). No significant differences in expectations of marrying (including intent to marry and expected age at time of marrying) or becoming a parent (including expected number of children) were found between the two groups.

Discussion

As anticipated, a higher percentage of the single parent family mothers had been employed during their children's early years. This is consistent with the often cited negative impact of divorce on families' economic circumstances. The creation of two separate households is financially taxing, requiring even mothers who had previously been unemployed to obtain employment. Their greater experience with maternal employment may have contributed to the single parent family participants stronger endorsement of the benefits of maternal employment. This group's scores on the BACMEC benefit subscale suggest that these students perceive day care experience as advantageous for children, and also see the merits of children being granted greater independence early on as a result of their mothers' working outside the home. However,

the participants from single parent homes did not evaluate the costs of maternal employment differently from their peers from integral families. Future research might explore factors influencing why the single parent group did not provide lower ratings on the cost subscale paralleling those on the benefit subscale.

Interestingly, the single parent background participants were found to be more likely to attribute a host of their own problems to their mothers' work status while they were growing up. This finding is at odds with their perception of the benefits of having an employed mother. It is possible that in many of these single parent families, the mothers were compelled to return to the workplace earlier than they would have preferred to return. This may have fostered negative attitudes toward the impact of maternal employment, which affected participants' responses on the Childhood Appraisal Scale. This notion is consistent with the finding that participants from single parent households rated the current quality of their relationships with their fathers more negatively. It may be that these students blamed their fathers for the failure of their parents' marriages, and also held them responsible for their mothers' having to work throughout their childhoods. Future research should examine the representativeness of these findings and assess whether maternal employment and father blaming were less in families where mothers worked only part-time.

It is also interesting to note that in both types of families, fathers were rated more negatively than mothers. Apparently even children coming from intact families report less satisfying relationships with their fathers An intact marriage does not guarantee that home life will be optimal or that the parents will be happily married. Relationships between fathers and children may be compromised by a variety of factors, independent of the parents' marital status.

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